

DESTABILIZING NICARAGUA

THE C.I.A. RIDES AGAIN

SAUL LANDAU AND
CRAIG NELSON

Q. Mr. President, have you approved of covert activity to destabilize the present government of Nicaragua?

A. Well, no, we're supporting them, the—oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, I'm sorry, I was thinking El Salvador, because of the previous, when you said Nicaragua. Here again, this is something upon which with national security interests, I just—I will not comment.

*—President Reagan's press conference,
February 18*

A covert operation directed by the Central Intelligence Agency against the Sandinist government in Nicaragua is now under way. According to two people present at secret briefings held last November and December, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders told members of the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence that the C.I.A. is secretly providing training, money and weapons for former members of Gen. Anastasio Somoza's National Guard who are now carrying out armed incursions into Nicaragua from bases in Honduras. The funds are being funneled through friendly Latin American countries. Reagan Administration ambassador at large Vernon Walters has negotiated with the government of Argentina and with elements in the security forces of Venezuela, Colombia and Chile to cooperate with the C.I.A. in destabilizing the Nicaraguan government, and to act as U.S. surrogates in actions in other Central American countries. (*The Washington Post* reported on C.I.A. plans for a \$19 million covert operation against Nicaragua in a front-page

story on February 14.) Other sources in both Congress and the executive branch confirmed that Enders reported to members of the select committees, in compliance with what the Administration considers to be the requirements of the Hughes-Ryan amendment to the 1976 foreign aid act.*

The Assistant Secretary told the Congressmen that the aim of the C.I.A.'s covert action is to incite unrest in Nicaragua using former Somoza guardsmen, dissident elements and ethnic minorities in Nicaragua and exile groups in the United States. Nicaraguan officials say that the former guardsmen's attacks are intended to provoke retaliatory measures by the Nicaraguan Army, thus creating a pretext for foreign military intervention.

Veteran C.I.A. official Nestor Sanchez, who is now Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs, has been placed in charge of the clandestine operations for the Caribbean basin, according to sources in the Defense Department. Enders commands the entire Central American and Caribbean policy team.

Other covert operations are also planned against Cuba and Grenada, and against guerrilla forces in El Salvador and Guatemala. Several members of Congress "understood" from their secret briefings that U.S. personnel would not be involved in combat. A photograph of a U.S. colonel carrying an M-16 near a combat zone in El Salvador that was recently published in American newspapers appeared to contradict the Administration's guarantees to Congress. At

*The number of Congressmen present at the briefings is not known. The Republican members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence are Barry Goldwater (chairman), Arizona; Jake Garn, Utah; John Chafee, Rhode Island; Richard Lugar, Indiana; Malcolm Wallop, Wyoming; Dave Durenberg, Minnesota; William Roth Jr., Delaware; Harrison Schmitt, New Mexico. The Democratic members are Daniel Patrick Moynihan, New York; Walter Huddleston, Kentucky; Joseph Biden Jr., Delaware; Daniel Inouye, Hawaii; Henry Jackson, Washington; Patrick Leahy, Vermont; Lloyd Bentsen, Texas. The Democratic members of the House Select Committee on Intelligence are Edward Boland (chairman), Massachusetts; Clement Zablocki, Wisconsin; Charles Rose, North Carolina; Romano Mazzoli, Kentucky; Norman Mineta, California; Wyche Fowler Jr., Georgia; Lee Hamilton, Indiana; Albert Gore Jr., Tennessee; Bob Stump, Arizona. The Republican members are J. Kenneth Robinson, Virginia; John Ashbrook, Ohio; Robert McClory, Illinois; G. William Whitehurst, Virginia; C.W. Bill Young, Florida.

Saul Landau is a senior fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies and co-author, with John Dinges, of Assassination on Embassy Row (Pantheon). Craig Nelson is a research associate with I.P.S.

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